

Two area patrol squadrons change hands

By Lt. Michael Sanders
VP-47 Public Affairs

Patrol Squadron 47 (VP 47), a maritime patrol squadron based out of Marine Corps Base Hawaii, changed command as Cmdr. Gregory Wittman relieved Cmdr. James Tanner June 30.

"[It has been a] fantastic tour," said Cmdr. Tanner as he prepared to leave for Millington, Tenn. "VP-47 has the best people that I have ever worked with," he added. It was an honor and privilege to serve with them. I wish them luck for the last 6 months of the inter-deployment training cycle and the next deployment."

Under Tanner's leadership, the "Golden Swordsmen" received recognition by achieving the Seventh Fleet Under Sea Warfare (USW) Excellence Award during their deployment to Japan. The Maintenance Department also shined, earning the 1999 "Golden Wrench"

award for maintenance excellence. Cmdr. Tanner was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for his significant accomplishments during his command tour.

The guest speaker at the ceremony was Rear Adm. Michael Holmes, Commander, Patrol and Reconnaissance Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

"We know it takes an all hands effort to get the job done," said Rear Adm. Holmes. "But success doesn't happen on its own. It takes a leader with the right vision, the right determination, and the right dedication, in order to come up with the recipe for success. Skipper Jim Tanner has been that person for the past year. He got things done," added Holmes.

The men and women of Patrol Squadron 47 fly the P-3C "Orion" maritime patrol aircraft. The P-3C performs many missions including anti-submarine warfare, surveillance, over-the-horizon targeting, and search and rescue.



By Patrol Squadron Nine Public Affairs

Patrol Squadron Nine (VP 9), based out of Marine Corps Base Kaneohe, Hawaii

changed hands July 13. In a traditional change of command ceremony Cmdr. Tim Brewer relieved Cmdr. Earl K. Hampton Jr. as commanding officer of VP-9.

The change of command came as the squadron celebrated the completion of a successful six-month deployment to Japan and the Western Pacific.

Commander Hampton, a native of Olongapo City, Philippines and a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, has served as a junior officer in VP-9 at NAS Moffett Field and then as an instructor in Patrol Squadron 31. He has also served on the USS Midway (CV 41) during the Gulf War and Desert Storm operations.

Prior to assuming command of VP-9, Cmdr. Hampton served as a Department head for

VP-4 and Commander of Task Group 72.2 in Okinawa. Cmdr. Hampton is looking forward to working as operations officer at Commander Task Force 72 in Atsugi, Japan.

Commander Tim Brewer is a native of Hickory, N.C. and also graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy.

Cmdr. Brewer's assignments prior to the command of Patrol Squadron Nine include a junior officer tour in VP-19 at NAS Moffett Field, instructor duty in Patrol Squadron 31 and a sea tour on the USS LaSalle in Bahrain.

Cmdr. Brewer attended the Naval War College in 1992 where he was a distinguished graduate in National Securities and Strategic studies. He has also served in VP-17 and as a department head for VP-9.

Prior to his return to VP-9, Cmdr. Brewer served as current operations officer and assistant chief of staff for operations at Patrol and Reconnaissance Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet.



VP-4 'Skinny Dragons' clean up in Thailand

By Patrol Squadron Four

THE Skinny Dragons of Patrol Squadron Four took a day off from training but got right to work in Thailand July 8.

The group stood down from the busy schedule of CARAT 2000, currently in Thailand conducting exercises with the Royal Thai Navy, and spent the day improving the grounds at an elderly care facility in Pattaya.

Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training is a series of bilateral exercises taking place throughout Southeast Asia this summer.

Early on a Saturday morning, 15 folks from Patrol Squadron Four's combat aircrews 6 and 7 boarded vans for the trek to the Banglamung Home for the Aged. Staff and residents and the home greeted the Americans with flower leis.

The facility is currently home to more than 260 elderly, including three octogenarians aged 101, 103 and 110.

"The objective was to clean-up and repair the facility's park which had fallen into disrepair," said Cmdr. Craig Whitaker, commanding officer of VP-4. "The park

is used by the residents as a social gathering spot where games are played and conversations enjoyed."

Instead of sitting by the pool at their hotel, the Skinny Dragons mowed, raked, trimmed trees, and burned rubbish from the accumulated overgrowth.

Throughout the morning, residents joined them, eager to help the group from VP4 with the clean-up project.

The group transformed the park by mid-day, and before the Americans left, they say residents were already the new surroundings.

Bruno Keller of the Rotary Club of Jomtien-Pattaya presented Whitaker, with a Rotary Club shield in appreciation, and many of the elderly residents offered their thanks.

"By early afternoon, the Skinny Dragons were back in the vans for the return trip, tired and blistered but with a new found appreciation and affinity for the people of Thailand," says Whitaker.

Patrol Squadron Four is home-based at Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe Bay and is currently on a six-month deployment to Japan. The squadron will support CARAT through September.



VP-4 photo

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CARAT moves to Indonesia

By Lt. Jane Tyler
Task Group 712.0 Public Affairs

SATTAHIP, Thailand —Adm. Preecha Phungsuan, deputy commander in chief of the Royal Thai Navy, bid farewell to U.S. naval forces of CARAT 2000 during the exercise's closing ceremony here July 14.

"We have been through seven days of intensive training and

everybody has put in their best effort. As I mentioned earlier, the exercise was a success and both sides have gained a lot of experience in the process," Preecha said.

Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training is a series of bilateral exercises taking place in Southeast Asia this summer. Sailors and Marines of USS Sides (FFG 14), USS Mount Vernon (LSD 39), USS Germantown

(LSD 42), USS Reruben James (FFG 57) and Landing Force CARAT worked with their Thai counterparts during the exercise.

"This exercise has also proven how important it is, that we continue to work together and share ideas," says Major Gen. Joseph T. Anderson, commanding general for 1st Marine Aircraft Wing.

The CARAT Task Group now travels to Surabaya, Indonesia for the next phase of the exercise.

Submarine Centennial History:

WWII submarine 'Wolf Pack' commander paid the supreme sacrifice



Official U.S. Navy photo

Capt. John Cromwell, "a true American hero."

By JOCS(SW/AW) Darrell D. Ames
Commander Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

A hero, by definition, is a person admired for their courage and nobility. The U.S. Navy Pacific Submarine Force produced herds of heroes during World War II, none more distinguished than Capt. John P. Cromwell. Operating as a submarine "Wolf Pack Commander," he paid the ultimate price in defense of his country.

In the fall of 1943 the U.S. Navy was preparing to assist in Operation Galvanic, a devastating amphibious invasion of the Gilbert Islands. The assault occurred on the morning of Nov. 20, 1943 as the Second Marine Division stormed Betio Island at the

southern end of Tarawa Atoll. While U.S. Marines were engaged with 4,000 entrenched Japanese soldiers, a dozen U.S. submarines were also seeing action in the waters nearby.

Admiral Charles Lockwood, Commander Submarine Force Pacific, had assigned 12 of his submarines to assist in the operation. One submarine, USS Corvina (SS 226), was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine four days earlier, and went down with all hands.

Capt. Cromwell boarded USS Sculpin (SS 191) in Pearl Harbor on Nov. 5, 1943, enroute to Operation Galvanic. Cromwell was to coordinate the three-submarine wolf pack of Sculpin, Searaven, and Apogon. Sculpin was directed to patrol east of Truk and intercept any Japanese reinforcements headed for Tarawa or Makin Island.

Capt. Cromwell knew the details of Operation Galvanic as well as the use of Ultra to decipher Japanese plans. He possessed much more information than the ordinary submarine skipper.

Sculpin, on station, detected a large Japanese convoy sailing from Truk to reinforce the Marshall Islands on Nov. 18. Sculpin's commanding officer, Lt. Cmdr. Fred Connaway, decided to circle the convoy and get into position for a submerged attack at dawn. As Sculpin was preparing to attack, the convoy saw her periscope and turned towards the submarine in an attempt to ram her. Connaway ordered a dive. After the convoy passed over, Sculpin surfaced to make another end around in broad daylight.

The convoy commander was very clever. He had left a "sleeper" behind, the destroyer Yamagumo. The ship spotted Sculpin and attacked, forcing the sub into a quick dive. A barrage of depth charges caused some damage so Connaway decided to go deeper and wait it out.

Several hours later, around noon, Connaway decided to come up for a look. As Sculpin was rising, the depth gauge stuck at 125 feet.

The temporary diving officer, a reserve Ensign named W. M. Fielder, failed to realize what had happened and kept planing up. Sculpin rose to the surface, was breached, and the destroyer attacked again.

As Connaway attempted to perform another

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er quick dive, 18 depth charges exploded all around the boat, inflicting more severe damage.

Leaks were everywhere, the plane's gear was out of commission, and the situation seemed hopeless. Connaway decided his best course of action was to surface and fight it out with his deck gun. Sculpin was soon on the surface, but found herself engaged in a one-sided affair.

The destroyer quickly destroyed the bridge, killing Connaway, the executive officer (Lt. Nelson Allen), and the gunnery officer (Lt. Joseph De Frees - son of Rear Adm. De Frees). Lt. G. E. Brown, another reservist, was now the senior officer assigned to the submarine and quickly took command. He chose to scuttle the boat and gave the order, "abandon ship." The crew struggled into life jackets as the Chief of the Boat opened the vents.

Capt. Cromwell, division commander with only 13 days at sea on his first war patrol, was faced with a predicament. He could abandon ship and face the possibility of severe torture in a Japanese prison camp or go down with the ship.

Knowing full well the possibility of the enemy gaining information about Operation Galvanic and the secrets of Ultra during torture, Cromwell chose to take the secret infor-

mation to the bottom.

He told Lt. Brown that he "knew too much" and would stay onboard. Ensign Fielder, perhaps feeling responsible, made the same decision. These two brave men - and 10 others - rode the ship down for the last time.

Half of Sculpin's crew were rescued by the Japanese: Lt. Brown and two other officers and 39 enlisted men. One crewman, badly wounded, was thrown over the side. Another, also wounded, managed to escape a similar fate by wrenching free and hiding amongst the other crewmen.

The surviving 41 Sculpin Sailors were taken to Truk for 10 days of interrogation. They were then divided into two groups for transport to Japan on two carriers: Chuyo and Unyo.

Enroute to its destination, the carrier Chuyo, carrying 21 Sculpin survivors, was torpedoed and sunk by USS Sailfish (SS 192) on December 31, 1943, and only one American escaped. This was a particularly coincidental and tragic event since Sculpin stood by Squalus (later recommissioned Sailfish) when she sank off Portsmouth, New Hampshire in 1939.

At Ofuna, the 21 survivors were repeatedly questioned, and they learned they were in an unofficial Navy prison camp. They were released from the camp a few at a time when the enemy became convinced that they could get no information from them, and were sent to work in the copper mines of Ashio.

There they were allowed to register as prisoners of war, and received at least enough food to live on, although not enough to maintain health properly. They remained at Ashio until released by American forces on Sept. 4, 1945.

When Adm. Lockwood learned of Sculpin and Capt. Cromwell's fate, he recommended Cromwell for the Medal of Honor. It was approved and awarded to his widow after the war.

Adm. Lockwood went on to say, "Capt. Cromwell's selfless act of personal sacrifice represents what our submarine force is all about. It stands for dedication, courage and honor in the face of adversity."

"John Cromwell is a true American hero," he added.